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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7556
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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 3706
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 8788
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 8181
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 9945
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 002250

SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: WORLD FOOD PROGRAM-LED ASSESSMENT OF PAKISTAN'S FOOD
CRISIS

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 2107; B. ISLAMABAD 2061;
[1](#)C. ISLAMABAD 1914; D. ISLAMABAD 1715; E. ISLAMABAD 1705; F.
ISLAMABAD 0669; G. KABUL 1254

Summary

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[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: World Food Program (WFP), the Food and
Agriculture Organization (FAO) and other international organizations
briefed Government of Pakistan (GOP) officials, donors,
non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and diplomats on the initial
phase of its food security assessment for Pakistan on June 27. The
team's preliminary conclusions track the information in reftels
regarding the severity of Pakistan's food crisis. Following the
July 11 conclusion of the survey, the team will have data which
clearly identifies the areas most at risk. Preliminary findings
indicate that Pakistan's food deficit populations are clustered in
Balochistan and the North West Frontier Province. End summary.

Assessment team initial findings consistent with Embassy
information

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[1](#)2. (U) Embassy USAID and USDA reps attended a June 27 meeting hosted
by the World Food Program (WFP), FAO and UNDP to review the
preliminary findings of the "Interagency Assessment Mission of the
Food Crisis in Pakistan." Members of this interagency team include
UNICEF, FAO, WHO, UNDP, UNESCO and the World Bank. Approximately 75
persons attended the meeting including GOP reps from the Ministry of
Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock,
the Planning Commission, the National Disaster Management Authority
(NDMA), and the National Rural Support Program (NRSP). Donors and
NGO representatives included the German and French embassies, the
Canadian International Development Agency, the Asian Development
Bank, the World Bank, the UK Department for International
Development, CARE, Oxfam, and the Agha Khan Foundation.

[1](#)3. (U) The assessment mission includes economists, public health
experts, nutritionists and statisticians. During the two hour
meeting, they explained the work of their eight enumerator teams
that have been conducting surveys throughout Pakistan since June 15.
The team reviewed the national food supply and demand situation.
(NOTE: The WFP numbers agree with Post's estimates provided in
reftels. Approximately 100 million Pakistanis live on USD 2 or less
a day, and the rising cost of basic agricultural commodities places

over 60 percent of Pakistan's population at risk. The cost of wheat and cooking oil, the most important staples, have risen 68 and 54 percent respectively in the last 12 months. End note.) The team also commented that the current food crisis is caused by external food and fuel price shocks, combined with self-inflicted domestic policy and price distortions between Pakistan's low domestic price and high international prices.

¶4. (U) The assessment team members expressed concern about the overall nutrition status of children in poor rural areas, and the effect that the combination of high food prices and spot food shortages are having on vulnerable groups.

¶5. (U) The assessment team circulated a color map that classifies each of Pakistan's 121 districts as "least vulnerable," "moderately vulnerable," "highly vulnerable" and "extremely vulnerable". They now classify 20 districts as "extremely vulnerable." These districts are not surprisingly clustered in Balochistan and North West Frontier Province. Noting spot wheat shortages, particularly in the North West Frontier Province and Balochistan, the panel opined that wheat scarcity so early in the wheat marketing year is an unusual phenomenon. They stated that food demand normally spikes sharply upward during Ramadan which begins this year in the first week of September, but food prices are likely to peak during the November-February lean period.

¶6. (U) On July 11, after all field survey teams have returned to Islamabad with their results, the Assessment Mission will present hard numbers regarding "emergency category" individuals and their more precise location.

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¶7. (U) The team also reviewed recent GOP steps to augment wheat supplies, including announced plans for commercial import of another 2.3 million metric tons of wheat during the next 6 months. The team noted that high world market prices for oil and wheat will place extraordinary strains on Pakistan's rapidly dwindling foreign exchange reserves, which they recognized as dipping dangerously low.

Comment

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¶8. (SBU) Comment: Once completed, the WFP-led assessment will provide an important tool for determining where to distribute food assistance. A group of independent analysts highlighting the GOP's policy missteps is also useful. We are concerned, however, by the team's observation that scarcity so early in the marketing year may be a sign that the gap between expected supply and demand may be greater than the 2.3 million metric tons of wheat anticipated by the GOP. We have also heard that Punjab farmers and millers are not releasing their wheat in expectation of higher prices during Ramadan, which is almost certainly contributing to wheat scarcity. We will report once the team has completed its assessment. End comment.

PATTERSON